

Quest for Survival in Suzanne Collins' "*The Hunger Games*"

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Abstract:

Dystopian literature is more emotionally strong and contrast in building up the character. Suzanne Collins uses this concept to construct her novel *The Hunger Games*, which shows a sixteen-year-old girl life experience. It showcases the important crisis like Belonging, Fate, Identity and Community problems which shapes the main protagonist Katniss. *The Hunger Games* talks about the sufferings of the people in the future world. Focussing on one character Katniss Everdeen, this paper tries to explore the quest that changes her life entirely. Many incidents such as losing her father, parting from her mother and little sister, gaining a new friend, losing her friend, friendship with Peeta and the game affects her life. Each of these situations acts as a quest that changes the life of Katniss. Through this research, the quest will be explored and analysed. This Paper focuses on the major issue of Survival in Katniss's life as she was selected for the game. It shows how Katniss changes into a fearless girl by overcoming her fate and finding her own Identity.

Keywords: Dystopian Literature, Dislocation, Self-Realization, Survival, Identity.

Introduction

Literature has a different change throughout the year with a variety of realistic studies. It is classified into a variety of systems based on language, genre, historical period, subject and national origin. American literatures are writings that produce in the United States of America and its colonies. American literature deals with expanding frontiers. Literature is divided into many terms like Postcolonial, Postmodern, Diaspora, Feminism etc. Dystopian literature is a form of speculative fiction that began as a response to Utopian literature. A dystopia is an antonym of a Utopia, which is a perfect society. A dystopia is an imagined community or society that is dehumanizing and frightening. The central themes of Dystopian novels generally fall under Government control, environmental destruction, technological

control, survival, loss of individualism. Survival is the main key concept in the dystopian novels.

Suzanne Collins, American author, screenwriter, best known for his young adult novels. She was the youngest of four children. She pursued a degree in theatre and telecommunications. While her writing may seem most relevant to young adults, the readers of all ages discover meaning in her work. Collins introduced her first novel, *Gregor the outlander* in 2003. While working in television, her stories are full of adventures, wars and gives fantasy experience for children. In 2003, she published her autobiographical novel *Year of the jungle*. The story is about her father who must go to the war in Vietnam. In the story when the father leaves his daughter, she struggles to understand what is happening for her and her family.

The Hunger Games was published in 2008. It talks about the sufferings of the people in the future world. Katniss Everdeen the main protagonist of the novel narrates the story of her life. There was only agony and pain which is reflected in each of the character's life in this novel. Katniss Everdeen tries to survive in the dystopian world. The game seen as festival and sorrow changes her life entirely. Katniss' losses her father at a very young age. She struggles a lot to survive in that country with her mother and little sister. She was separated from her family to participate in the game. There is no assurance for life in the game. Gaining friendship and losing it became part of the game. Her friendship with Peeta is a confusing one, but it changes her throughout the game. The game helps her to understand the value of survival. Each of the situations act as a quest that changes the life of Katniss.

Quest for Survival in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*

The Hunger Games is a young adult dystopian fiction. This novel is about a young girl called Katniss Everdeen and her survival among a sadist and capitulate people. Friedrich Nietzsche once said "To live is to suffer; to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering" (Nietzshce). When Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl from district 12 forced to join in the games, she finds that she has no control over her life. Katniss has to suffer to survive in this game. The game which is widely known as "The Hunger Games" which was conducted by capitol.

Panem is a post-apocalyptic North America which consists of capitol and 12 districts. Formerly it was 13 districts but district 13 was destroyed. When capitol won the war, they took control over the districts. They conduct a game each year to show their authority over them. This game was conducting for nearly 73 years. The districts accept it without any questions, as a sign of defeat. The Hunger Games is none other than a savage thing. Where each district has to send one girl and one boy for the game. They were placed in an arena. They have to fight with each other till death. The one who survives till end will be the winner of the game. This whole game was telecasted as a television show for the people in capitol

and districts. When Katniss Everdeen was drawn into this game, she finds some meaning in her survival.

The Survival is the main theme, which plays a significant role in this novel. As Laurence Gonzales says "Survival is the celebration of choosing life over death. We know we're going to die. But survival is saying: perhaps not today. In that sense, survivors don't defeat death; they come to terms with it" (Gonzales). To survive under the control of capitol is a difficult thing which every district faces in their life. Starvation is the most common thing in district 12, Katniss express the grief of starvation as "if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet be much quicker" (17). Even Katniss chooses bullet before starvation because it is much quicker. People mostly die of starvation in district 12.

To survive in this capitalist world Katniss goes for hunting, but it is prohibited in district. Gale is an important character in this novel. He is the only friend of Katniss in district 12. Katniss befriends Gale very soon because of the vibes they share. The friendship that develops between Katniss and Gale is touching, heart-wrenching and extremely powerful. Perhaps the reasons that these two people gravitate towards each other is because of their incredible similarities. There were a lot of correlation in the lives of Katniss and Gale. Both Katniss and Gale are the only source for their families. Both of them lost their father, for both characters this loss haunts them like a plague. They go for hunting together. They sell and share money and food among themselves. Another thing they had in common is the freedom which they log from capitol. Even they had a thought of running out of their country. They develop a special relationship with each other. Katniss once express her feeling as "the only person with whom I can be myself. Gale" (6). Katniss feels free with Gale. She can eat, laugh, run and feels fewer burdens with him. But at home she feels pressure, and she acts as a different person to take care of her family.

After the death of her husband Katniss mother falls into depression. She can't do anything. She loses all her hope. Katniss have to take the responsibility. She hates it, but she has to do it for her family. She can't live her childhood happily. Furthermore, she always has a fear to survive. At the reaping, when Prim name was selected her mother was so strong in outside and didn't express anything. When Katniss volunteers her for her sister, her mother was shattered and cried for her. From that moment she gains all her hope to take care of her family.

To survive in the game Katniss, have to get a sponsor. Sponsors help tributes with food and medicine. So, to attract the audience she acts as she is in love with Peeta. Peeta is another tribute from district 12. Katniss has some connection with Peeta. It was the time when Katniss lost all her hope. Her father had been killed in a mine accident, and she has to take care of her family. They were slowly starving to death. Peeta's family owns a bakery.

When Katniss was starving for food, he helped her with bread, for this he even got beaten by his mother. "To this day, I can never shake the connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, and the dandelion that reminded me that I was not doomed" (32). This action of Peeta makes her to believe in herself to survive in this world.

The game is an entertainment for the capitalist people. Twenty-four tributes will be dropped in the merciless jungle. Where they have to survive to be a survivor. "Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch-this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy" (18). There will be one survivor, for this they have to kill each other. The forest is full of terror. To survive the person should have a proper shelter, food and water. Above all the person should have a positive attitude and ready to face others.

The word "happy hunger games!" is mentioned in the most part of the novel. It showcases two meaning, on the one hand it humiliating the people of district and on the other hand it is a festival for Capitol people. They celebrate it each year. The reality is it is a message from Capitol that "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a figure, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen" (19).

Rue a twelve-year-old girl from District eleven resembles Prim in every action. Katniss sees her has her own sister. They join hands to survive in the games. But she was killed by a tribute. Even though Katniss took revenge for her, the loss of Rue affects Katniss. Katniss remembers Peeta's word "Only I keep wishing I could think of a way to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games" (236). She sings a song for her and buried her with flowers properly.

Peeta and Katniss form a false belief that they are in love with each other from the start. So that they can get a sponsor. But Katniss didn't like that she hates it. But Haymitch explains that

He made you look desirable! And let's face it, you can use all the help you can get in that department. You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he wanted you. Now they all do. You're all they're talking about. The star-crossed lovers from District Twelve. (135)

Through this it is show that Peeta is trying to save her by getting sponsors. She has two different views on Peeta. On one hand she feels that Peeta is using her. On another hand she feels that he is helping her.

In the game at one-point Peeta joins with tributes from district one and tries to catch her. By this act of Peeta, Katniss hates him and wants to kill him. But Peeta's intention is to save her. When Katniss understands it, they work together to survive. In the end Katniss and Peeta are the only survivors. The game makers want only one survivor, so they ask them to fight one another. Even in this situation Peeta wants to scarify himself, but Katniss decides to eat blackberry fruit which is poison. By this act the game makers announce two victors. Katniss's action shows her as not only survivor but also a rebellion who fights.

Katniss from the start of the story acts according to her heart. She listens to her heart in hard situations. Katniss's relationship with each character changes her life. They have very great impact in her life. And she learns a lot from each of them. Each and every relationship is very special to her as each teaches her something for life. There are two relationships in the game that are very close to her heart. One is of Rue and the other is of Peeta. The Rue's friendship is more than a sisterly relationship, it is a friendly one. Peeta becomes her lover inside the game. Even though it is an act, their friendship is elevated as it involves a lot of struggle. Katniss's relationship with Peeta is so intense that it cannot be compared to anything else. So, the relationship that she encounters with people alters her life positively.

Conclusion

The novel written by Suzanne Collins tells the story of a sixteen-year-old girl who lives in a dystopian world. The Novel is massive in selling. Some parts of the novel are taken from Collins personal experience. Collins has a unique style of writing. Words used in the book are so simple that it can be read by any person. Words help people to communicate with one another. At the same time, it is also more dangerous. The impact of words and language is felt throughout the novel. By combining understandable language and sense of humour, Collins presents this significant story. Somehow, she drags people into the story.

Events are many in life. Not all incidents leave an impact but among them, there are some events that act as a life changing one. In *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, survival is achieved through hardship. There are many incidents in Katniss's life. Of which, some leaves her completely shattered while others leave her at the peak of growth. Though they may have different impacts, each of them plays a vital role in her life acting as a turning point that changes her life. Through this hardship Katniss learns to be a survivor.

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